



# Kingdom Storytellers

Towards a justice-driven and enabling Community of God

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## Inclusion is a matter of justice, not charity



David's benevolence does beg the question, would he have shown this kindness to Mephibosheth had he not been best friend's Mephibosheth's father, Jonathan? A King going out of his way to restore the birthright of a disabled person he didn't even know existed would seem unlikely given cultural context. However, scripture tells us that David was a "man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22) and thus would have been familiar with God's laws about fairness and justice outlined in Deuteronomy. Evidently, an early adopter of the disability rights that underpin the inclusion practice that we see today!

### 2 Samuel 9:7

**"Don't be afraid," David said to [Mephibosheth], "for I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table."**

As a child I always had a strong sense of fairness. Not always with the right motives, it has to be confessed. However, I knew enough about the world even then that having a disability would put me at a disadvantage if I wanted to thrive in it. Despite the enactment of laws and international conventions protecting the rights of disabled people, society, and the churches and missional communities within them, has been reluctant to let go of the prevailing charity model. One of the reasons for this being how the Bible frames the word 'justice'. Frequently it is followed by one of nine words: widow, fatherless, orphans, poor, hungry, stranger, needy, weak, and oppressed. Instead of promoting justice and advocating for the rights of these people, they have then been seen as passive recipients of charity rather than people with rights and potential contributors. 'The Hebrew Bible mentions the word 'justice' 422 times and the word 'righteousness' 276 appears times. Nearly always appearing together, they mean 'to make things right' (World Vision, 2007) suggesting that making things right for these people in particular is a priority for God. Of course, justice also means punishing wrongdoers and compensating victims, but in a fuller sense, it means promoting fairness and straightening out situations and relationships so they are as God intended them to be. The implication here being that inclusion isn't just a matter of choice or a nice-to-have in our communities. Doing justice is about being intentional about inclusivity, shifting our perspective away from a charity model so that those who are disadvantaged and excluded for whatever reason have opportunities to pursue life in all its fullness.

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### REFLECT...

On [Bono's famous sermon](#) at a US Presidential prayer breakfast, "**It's not charity, it's justice**". What does it look like when you replace the word 'justice' with the word 'grace'?



### PRAY...

For more grace in your community to practice inclusion as society moves away from the charity towards social justice.



### & STEP OUT!

Are there any initiatives in your community that promote and restore justice for any of the groups of people listed? How can you engage with, or learn from, their approach?